

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY LANDSCAPE PROJECTS

TO MAKE YOU A BETTER PHOTOGRAPHER



Steve Pease

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Steven Pease



Most people love to look at and take great pictures, and we all see creative shots that we wish we would have taken, because they tell a story that we can relate too and love to share with others.

The toughest thing about being a great photographer is training your eyes to see and capture with your camera, the vision that you are creating in your mind.

To get to be able to do that takes a couple of key things. Number one is to know your camera like the back of your hand, and the other is training yourself to see everything in the shot, and setting it up to tell a story in one image.

The only way to get beyond that point is practice. Getting good at anything requires practice. The best way to practice is to get out and take pictures. It's hard to take creative pictures with no plan in mind. The key is to have projects and a plan, and go out and look for specific shots and concepts.

This purpose of this book is to give you some learning project ideas so that you can easily train yourself to become an accomplished photographer and take the kind of shots you want.

Spend some time thinking about how to do the projects, and then go out and look at things with a plan of how to do them.

If you go through the projects and spend some time on each one, you will take the kind of shots that people will look at and say that was done by a pro.

Thank you for downloading and reading my book, and being willing

to learn and improve your photography.

I would greatly appreciate if you would [go to the Amazon](#) site and leave a review about my book if you have a minute.

Have fun with the projects while you learn.

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Chapter One

Photo a day

This project is very popular, and most people think they can do this project without much trouble. It sounds easy, but it's not.

If you want to take a quality shot every day for an entire year, it takes some time every day. It takes more time than you think. Start with a shorter goal, and work to a year if it works for you.

You don't want to take a random snapshot every day, just to say you did. To do this project right and to have some quality photos at the end of the project, it is going to require some time on your part.

You will have days when you are frustrated that you can't come up with anything to shoot.

This project will force you to be creative. You will start to think about things like, how to take a really cool shot of everyday ordinary things like a glass of water, a butter knife, a piece of fruit, etc.

Some days it's really easy, last week we were at the lake, and I saw this shot and snapped it with my phone.



It is a shot with a cell phone so it's not the best resolution, but the concepts are the same.

The picture tells a story about a beautiful evening sitting on the dock with a line in the water, the colors are changing and not a wave on the lake. The sun angle is low, close to sunset.

Very peaceful and relaxing, and it comes through in the shot. It brings a very good memory for me and my wife, but anyone who wasn't there, can still feel the peace and how nice it was at that time.

Like I said before, this one was easy, and some days like this one; you will take 20 shots that you feel would be a good "photo of the day" for your project.

To be technically correct, you need to take a unique shot every day. I know sometimes you aren't able to do it, for whatever reason. You can cheat if you need to by using a shot from a different day, but only do it if you have to.

Lots of photographers think they can do this project; most of the photos a day project are to do it every day for one yr. 365 days of photos.

The reality is that most people can't keep up with it. It is a big commitment to keep on top of it. You need to do it one day at a time, try it for a week, if you're having fun, go for a month and keep going if you want. The key is to get you to think about photography more, and lean to see things differently.

One of the really cool things about this project is that you start thinking about photography all the time, every day. The project helps you start seeing potentially awesome photos all over the place. Places you have been often and things you have seen frequently, but you never saw as a great photo before.

You can do the project and keep track of it on your own, but it's much more fun to do it on one of the websites that is set up for it. You can then share with others doing the same project and compare your shots to others, and see what you can do to make your shots better. Doing it on the website is also a motivator to make you keep taking the shots, every day.

Some other cool things about doing this project is that you can look back at the end of the year, and you are able to remember what you did on each day throughout the year, good or bad because of the instant reminder of that day.

Make sure you have a camera with you at all times every day. This is much easier now than it was just a few years ago. Almost everyone has a phone on them all the time that will take pictures that are more

than adequate for the project.

Some tips to keep you going through the project

- Try to tell a story about the day with your shots. Try to use your composition creativity in all your shots and don't just snap a shot to get something to post.
- If you see an excellent shot, take a few minutes to take the shot, don't think I will get my daily shot later, you may not see another decent shot.
- Keep a notebook, or keep notes on your phone if you have an idea for a great shot, but you just can't get to it today.
- If you start running out of ideas, set a weekly theme such as, flowers for this week, or special buildings like barns or churches or skyscrapers.
- Try to post your photos daily or at least weekly so you don't get behind.
- Add notes with your photos, even if just a line, so others will know what is going on and what the story of the photo is.
- Have fun with it and try and stick with it as long as you can.

Here are some of the places where you can do your project online.

<http://365project.org/>

<http://www.blipfoto.com/>

<http://www.photoblog.com/>

<http://momentile.com/>

<http://instagram.com/>

You can also use blogging sites like [Blogger.com](#). Or do the projects on your own website like many people do.

There are other options as to where to share your shots, these are some of the most popular ones, just have fun and learn.

If you decide to take on this project, commit to it and stay with it for as long as you can. You will be proud of yourself at the end of the challenge, and you will be a better photographer.

Chapter Two

Time lapse

This project is not one that you are going to learn much about photography, from the standpoint of taking photos in the normal sense.

You will learn a wealth of information about how light varies, when the light for pictures is best, and how things change, sometimes much faster than you thought. You will also learn that the results of the project are cool to look at.

The traditional way is to take a shot of a spot at intervals of time. This gives you an almost video like showing of pictures, and when you finish the time period, you put them together into a slide show, when run at a fairly quick speed, so you can see what changes over the course of the shooting time.

The main use and what makes time lapse really cool is that you can take things that happen over long periods of time, and condense it into a couple of minutes or less.

There are several cameras that come with this capability. I have one that will do this; you can set it up on a tripod and set it to take a shot every so often, from one second up to 10 hour intervals. It will keep going until the battery dies or the memory card is full.

Another way you can do this project is to take a picture of the exact same spot at intervals for a set period of time. For instance, you would take a shot of a garden with beautiful flowers, or even your back yard.

You take a shot at the same time of day and from the identical location and angle for a year. Take one shot a week or a shot twice a week.

After you reach the end of the year, or whatever time period, you pick, you run them in the slide show and show how the view changed over time.

You can also do the project with people. You can take a portrait shot of a person every week, or once a month, or once a year, for as long as you want, then put them together and show the way they have changed over time.

Another example of a common use is a series of pictures of a woman going through a pregnancy. You can see the changes over time from beginning to end.

Once you get the pictures taken, there are several software programs that you can use to put the slide show together. My favorite program is Pro Show Producer, but there are many options.

The concepts of time-lapse photography are simple; the actual finished product can be a very long time-consuming process.

I recommend that you start out with something simple. Try shots of a flower opening, set your camera to take a shot every 30 seconds for a couple of hours and see how it looks.

Depending on the flower, you can vary the timing of the photos to get a nice smooth transition that looks like you made a video of a flower opening, in a matter of a minute or so.

Here is an example of a time lapse of the new world trade center that consists of hundreds of thousands of pictures taken over a period of nine years. This is an amazing commitment by the photographer, to get this project done. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nn11DWH_LEA

This is probably my favorite one because it shows what you can do on bright days with lots of clouds moving across the sky, in several beautiful locations. Very well done, and a lot of time spent taking the shots. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gD_9WPFFb4

Here is another link to a whole section of time lapse on YouTube that you can see how cool these are, and kill a bunch of time if you want to watch. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=time+lapse&page=2

There is no end to what you can do with time lapse photography, and what you can show in a way that can only be done like this.

Chapter Three

Shapes

Shapes are one of the best projects that you can work on because you can turn this into many projects. There are many different shapes you can look for in natural and man-made things.

The way to do this project is to pick a shape, and go out with your camera, and all the photos you take must have the shape you pick as one of the main focus points of the photo.

For example if you pick triangles as your shape, all shots you take on that outing, must have the triangle as a main part of the shot.

The great thing about this project is it really makes you think, and it forces you to look for and see things that you have never seen before.

You will be amazed at the shapes you see when you are specifically looking for them.

Two shapes in one shot, a great circle shape and a cross in the center.



Here is another shot that has two shapes in it. The key to shape pictures is to get you to see things that you would not normally see. You look at the object and you see more shapes. When you look and point them out, it is very obvious that they are there.



This shot is a good shot of a spherical shape, and a triangle. Things like this that you see every day, and you don't even think about the shapes. It's all about looking at everything, and seeing everything about it.

The next shot is round or spherical. The vibrant colors make the shot stand out and make it more interesting.



You can pick any shape you want, circles, hearts, rectangles, squares, etc.

This project will get you looking at everything more closely and trying to find the shapes in the scene you're looking at. This is a very good project to improve your photography.

Getting the right composition, lighting, color and tone are all important, and you will see these things better because you will be looking more intently at the scenes you see.

This is a great rectangle shot that I took in the fall near the Kettle River near Hinckley MN.



The whole point of this project is to get you to look and see things you wouldn't see normally. The benefit to seeing more is that you will use the shapes to frame, or focus on the subject better, or just make more interesting photos.

Again, have fun while you are learning and you become a better photographer in the process.

Pick a shape for a day shoot, or even for a week. Every shot you look at, look for the shapes and set up the shot.

Chapter Four

Aging

Aging is a fun project. The point is to go out shooting, and look for things that are dead, rotting, wearing away, old, etc. Look for anything that has gone past its best times, past its useable time.

It doesn't mean that something is bad because it is decaying or past it's prime. People who are old and have wrinkled skin and look weathered can be made into some very cool portraits.

Some of the most memorable portraits from Time magazine, or national Geographic are cool portraits of older people.

Some of the things you can use to show aging.

- Old people
- Rotting plants
- Rotting teeth
- Abandoned buildings
- Broken down buildings
- Old cars
- Old rotting anything

Anything you find that shows something past its prime.



This is a great shot of the old falling down boat house at my in-laws cabin in central Minnesota.

The boathouse was solid and well built. It's all rocks from the lake mortared together. There is a spring that comes out of the hill in the back, and the water has been eating away at it for many years.

Some things get better as they age. If you watch the TV show American Pickers, they think everything gets better with age.

Some of the things they pick are old and look very aged, yet they sell them for a lot of money, because they are aged and are rare.



This barn is near Giese Minnesota.

I love old wooden barns; they are one of my favorite things to take pictures of.

It's sad that in another 25 years, there will probably not be any wooden barns left.



This old store, also in Giese Minnesota was my wife's grandpa's store, he ran it for many years sold it to someone else, who ran it for a while longer, then is closed.

It got more decayed and was torn down about 5 or 6 years ago.



Like I said, wooden barns are one of my favorite things to shoot. I have hundreds of shots of wooden barns.

My perfect job would be to get a motorhome and with my wife, drive around the country taking shots of wooden barns and old churches, which are another one of my favorites to shoot.



This is an old cedar fence in my backyard at my old house. Decay is very cool looking and can be made into very interesting photos.

Some things like Cedar have a more pleasant look and most people

like them better as they get aged.



Some slightly rotting veggies, still have good color but starting to deteriorate.

Chapter Five

Textures

Texture is a really fun project. There are so many things that you can find that have texture. The shot above of the wooden fence gate is a good texture shot as well as aging. You can find good texture shots almost everywhere you look. Start looking around your house, look at the ceiling, walls, carpet flooring, etc.



This is a favorite shot of mine. There is texture in the barn, the fence, and the grass. The point of this project is to force yourself to look closer at everything you are shooting and look at how texture makes your shot more interesting. If you picture the above shot with nice smooth siding on the cabin and no grass on the ground, and a smooth metal roof, the shot would be much less interesting and just not a great shot.

The next shot is a great texture shot that shows what hoar frost does when it forms on trees and grass and everything it touches. It is something that many people living in warmer climates will likely never see. Even in northern climate we only see it probably once a year on average. If you can get our and shot it when it happens, you can get some great shots.



The shot above is a shot of a very large wasp nest that was in a tree in our yard. It shows great texture and the amazing way wasps create a very cool nest.

Look at everything around you when you are walking through your

yard and everywhere else, look at everything from a photographer's perspective so you start seeing things no one else sees, and that you likely never saw before either.

Seeing things that other don't see will make you a better photographer all by itself. Harsh side lighting is something you can use in texture shots, it brings out the texture more than flat light on lighting.



This shot is of a huge palm leaf at a park in Minnesota. There is good texture in the folds of the leaf and the little white bumps on the edge of the fold.

The park is Como Park in St Paul Minnesota, one of my favorite places to go hunting for great photos. I have been going there to take pics for over 30 years and I have taken close to 10,000 shots there of many different subjects.

The park has a great zoo, great indoor tropical gardens, an outdoor Japanese garden, a beautiful golf course and a several hundred acre park. It is a very popular park on nice summer days that can be very busy, so you need to go there during the week, or early on weekends to get the good shots.



This shot is another one that I made in my own yard. The wishing well that is in chapter 3 was in a shady spot in the yard. It grew moss on in most of the time but this year the moss was much bigger and a bonus was the mushroom.

I think this shot is a great example of what texture adds to a photo. The mushroom is a cool item in itself, but you have to agree that the texture of the moss and the decaying wood adds a lot to the shot.

Chapter Six

In your yard

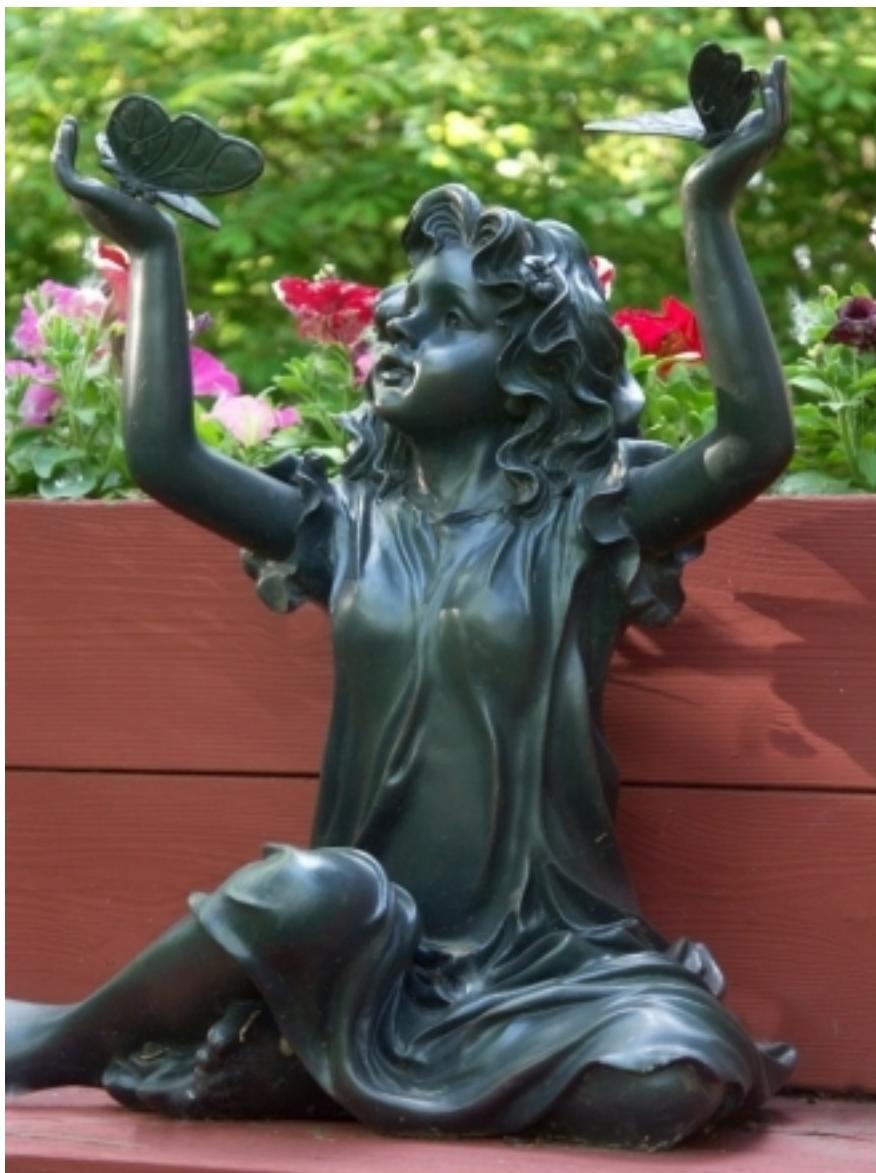
The project is all about in your yard. Go into your yard and look at everything, look at things in a different way than normal. Really look at everything.

Try to create a good shot from normal objects in your yard. If you don't have a yard, go to a local park. Look at things from a photography point of view.



This shot is some frogs that my wife had in the garden. Adding in the plants and the cottonwood seeds adds a little bit of more interesting objects in the shot, without taking away from the point of the shot, which are the frogs.

The shot below is a cool stature that my wife got somewhere. I added the flowers to the shot to bring in some more color while the girl statue is the main subject.





This is a shot of a Halloween decoration that was a full body size creature that my wife bought from a guy who had a bunch of Halloween decorations for sale on the side of the road.

It was in Anoka Minnesota, the Halloween capital of the world. There were several pieces that we had for several years; they scared the kid who came to the door.

Below is a chipmunk that came up to eat a piece of bread while I was sitting on the deck. We had many families of chipmunks living in our yard; they were used to people, and were not very scared of us.

I had a couple of them run across my foot one day while they were chasing each other.



The shot above was in our garden. My wife had a great garden in our yard, the flower was cool but the dragon fly was posing for the shot. I have over 10,000 pictures that I took in our yard over 10 years or so.

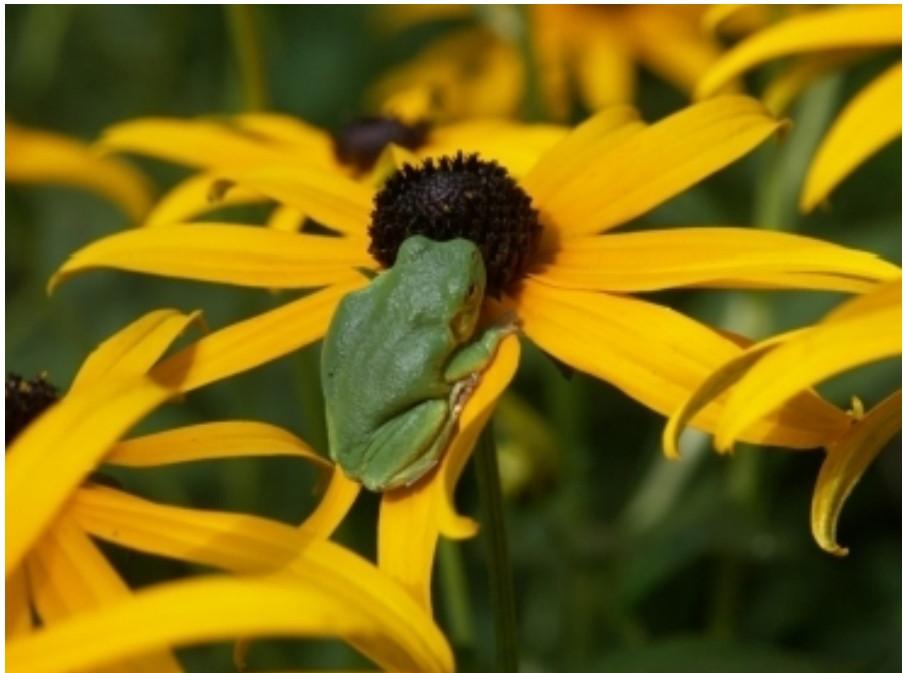
Many of them became cool memories of the different things that were in our yard, and creatures that were coming and going, and living in the yard.

Most of these things I would never have seen if I wouldn't have gone looking for them. Many of the shots I took of flowers in the garden, even showed up things that I didn't see when I took the shots.

But when I looked at them on the computer, there was something really cool that was a bonus.

Some very cool looking bugs, and some other creatures that I found just looking for things to shoot, and there they were.

I would never have seen this guy if I hadn't been out in the yard looking for photos with camera in hand.



Chapter Seven

All in focus

To get the whole shot in focus, you need to understand at least the concept of hyper focal distance. Hyper focal distance is the closest distance you can focus in front of you, and have the shot in focus all the way to infinity.

You can calculate hyper focal distance exactly; [follow the link here to see how to do it](#). The best landscape shots are in focus front to back.

It can be very frustrating when you think you have a great shot, and some things that you want in the shot are out of focus.

So practice using the hyper focal distance and focusing where you take the shot from. A general rule of thumb is to focus about one third of the way into the shot, that way you get the most of the shot in focus from front to back.

This is one of my favorite shots that I have ever taken, you notice the rocks in the foreground are sharp focus as is the rest of the shot all the way to the light House and the clouds, the whole shot is in focus. To take really good landscape shots, you want the whole scene in focus front to back.

If you learn to do this correctly your landscape shots will be much better and much more enjoyable.



The shot below is the perfect example of how the rocks and bushes in the foreground are all in focus as well as the water in the clouds behind. I can't stress enough how important this is to make really good landscape photos.

There are some times you want to have parts of the shot blurred so it focuses all of the attention on the subject of your shot, but most of the time, you want the whole shot in focus, front to back.

Sometimes you will take pictures that have the foreground out of focus, you can fix it sometimes by cropping that part out, but a lot of times the foreground has something in it that you want to use for scale for the whole picture, so you don't want to crop out.

Try to concentrate on getting the shot in focus front to back when you take it.



The shot below is different even though it's a landscape shot, it's obviously not as far out view, but you still want to get it all in focus front back.

The flowers in the foreground add a lot to the picture. The statue is the main subject of the picture but without the flowers it's not really as nice to look at.





The scene above was taken in Zion national Park, if you notice the rocks and close foreground are in focus as well as the beautiful cliffs and rocks in the background.

If you look at the picture and just imagine foreground being out of focus and blurry, you can see that it takes a lot away from the shot, it just doesn't make the picture is interesting.

Having the foreground in focus also does a type of framing, framing the shot often adds interesting items to the shot that just make your picture overall better.

One thing I always try to do is look at a picture after I take it, notice where your eyes go, what is the first thing you see when you look at the picture. Hopefully it's the cliff in the background the different colors and rocks, their shapes against the sky.

After your eyes focus on the main subject, you start looking around different parts of the picture, that's when you see foreground subjects, the tumbleweeds, the bushes, everything that adds to this shot.

One more example of full shot focus is another one of my favorite pictures. This picture was taken at Bryce Canyon national Park just north of where the needles are, the snowcapped mountain in the background is 87 miles from this point it's just an amazing view perfectly clear day.

There are so many interesting things in the shot, I think the trees in the foreground add to it as well as the colored rocks middle and then the snowcapped peaks in the back to spring the whole shot together perfectly.

The framed shot in Chapter twenty three is from the same spot; I zoomed in and used the trees to frame the mountains in the shot. It's a great example of how you can get a totally different look and perspective without even moving.



I can't stress enough how important it is for good landscape shots to have a shot in focus front to back.

The way to really do that is to check the hyper focal distance, then get out there and just practice, that is how you really figure out where you have to shoot to get the best focus front back.

Chapter Eight

Sunsets

One of the keys to getting the best sunset shots is to have shot in focus front to back, while making sure the exposure is right. Play with the ISO settings on camera as well as where you actually take the meter reading, make sure you get the right exposure.

Finding out where the sun should be in the picture for correct exposure is sometimes difficult because you're pointing the lens directly at the sun.

Try metering above the sun, with it just out of the shot, then try just below, with the sun out of the shot. You will see a big difference. One huge advantage of digital cameras is you can see results right away.

The picture below is one of my favorite sunset pictures of all time. The whole picture, front to back is in focus, showing the interesting foreground items, the waves, and the interesting background items with the the sun right on the horizon.

The best sunset shots also have good clouds in them. The colors I think are perfect in this shot. Everything just came together perfect for this shot.



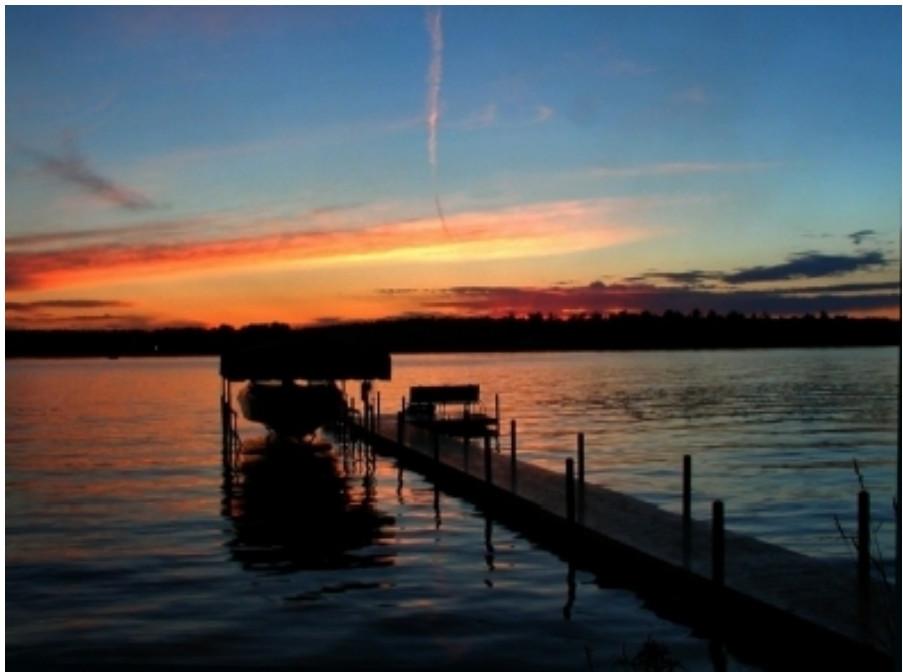
One of the bad things about taking sunset shots is that you only have

5 to 10 min. of perfect light to get the shot you want.

When you get the opportunity for good sunset picture be ready take a lot of shots, conditions will change by the minute, what you see in this picture above, will be completely different in a minute or two.

If you want to get the best pictures of sunsets you really want to be there at least 20 min. ahead of time so you can prepare and be ready when the light is right.

This shot is one I took at my brother in laws cabin, the shot is from the shore on a beautiful summer night. I picked a couple of things in this picture that really made it stand out and got into a position so the doc was leading directly into the sunset, the colors are nice and the shot turned out just like I wanted to.



Sunset shots are great to look at, even if you weren't there because they are so relaxing; they just give you a feeling of calm. Most of the time there's nothing else going on picture that's what makes it so relaxing.

Again you want to focus on getting shot clear and focus front to back so the viewer gets the whole experience.

This next picture is one I took a different lake where I was fishing at sunset the boat just happen to be going by just at the right time, and I

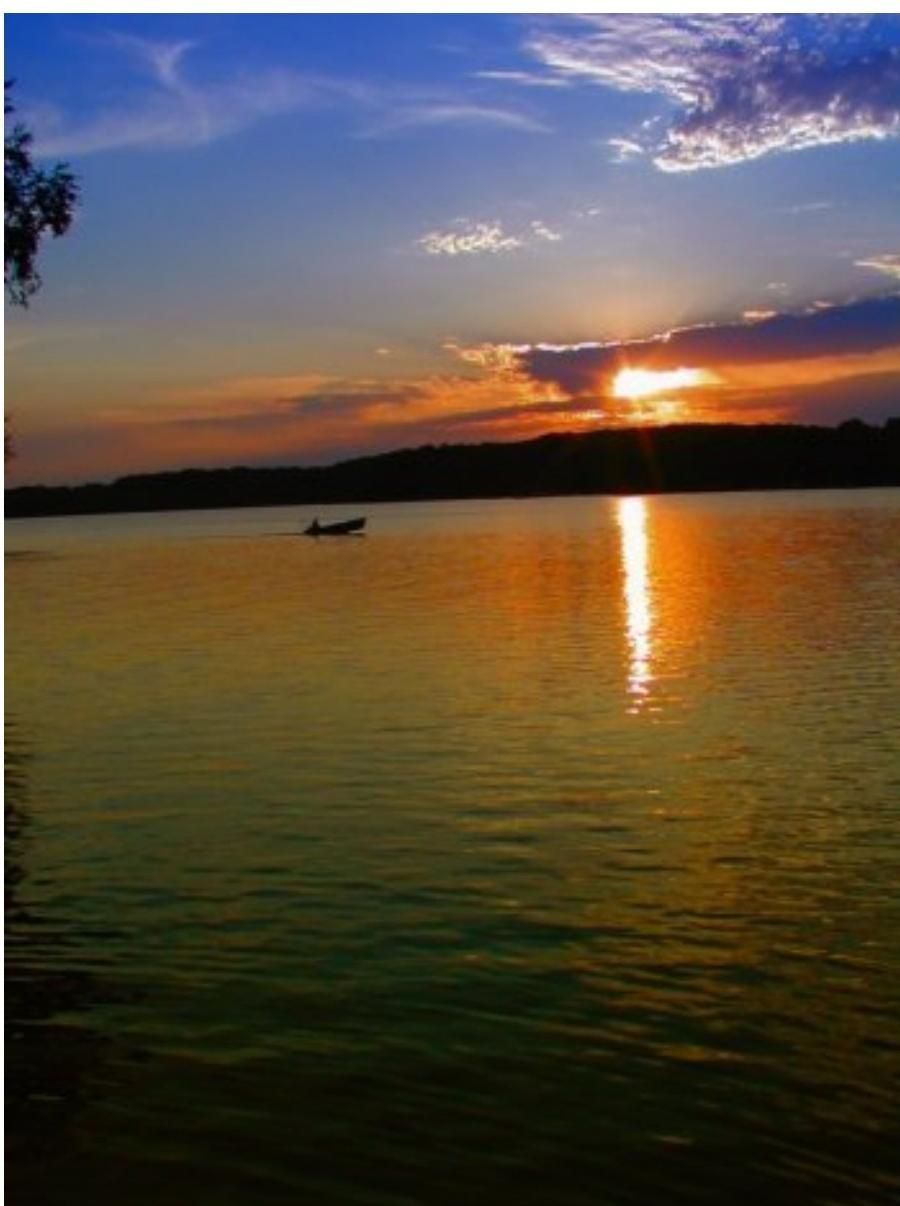
got the shot.

The sunset itself is pretty cool, but I definitely think the boat added something great to the overall photo. I had a camera with me so I was prepared.

Sunset shots are shots that are hard to predict before you actually see what you want to shoot. So you have to be ready at any time to make the picture.

One thing really nice now is almost everyone has a phone that will take decent pictures. So if you always have your phone with you, you can at least be assured of getting shot.

It may not look as good as if you had your digital camera but at least you get it.



The shot below is what the first shot from above looked like just a couple of minutes later.

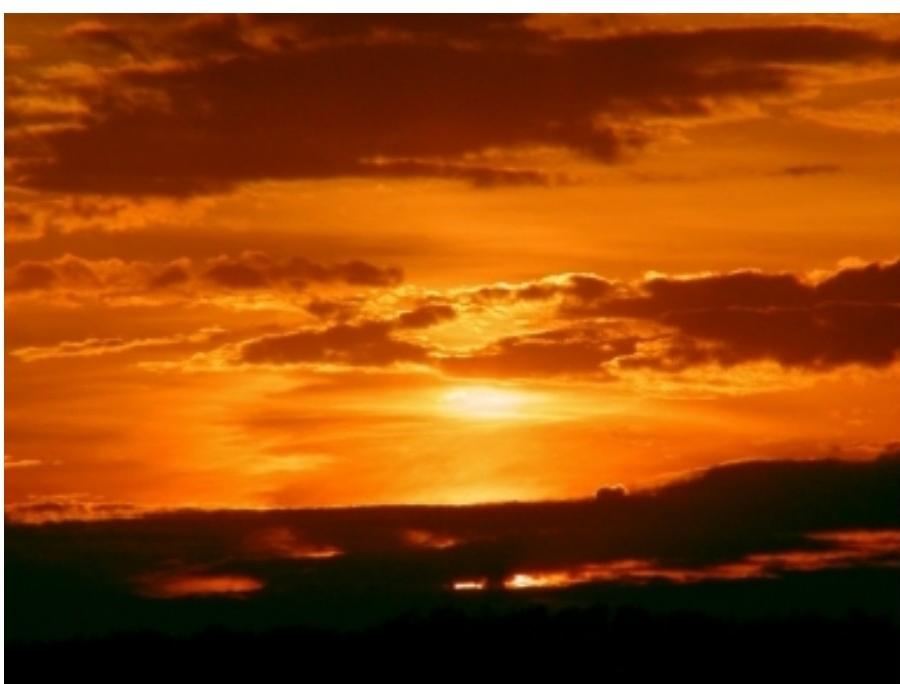
I think it's still a good sunset picture but it's not the same and it's not quite as dramatic. There are different levels of sunset shots, because

they changes so quickly. That is why you need to be there before the best ones happen.



This picture below is one of those ones that I took this because the colors are so vibrant. I actually stopped on the side of the road and took this picture just because the colors were so cool. This was just a cloud shot because I had no setup time.

I think it's still a shot worth taking because of the colors, but if I would've had time would've definitely taken it from a different perspective.



Chapter Nine

Blur Foreground

Blurring the foreground of a shot is something that you will use as a technique to focus on the subject of a shot. The majority of landscape pictures are not taken this way. Most landscape photos you want to have sharpness from front to back of the shot.

It takes a bit of creativity to find the right subjects to use in a shot where you want to blur the foreground.

Most of these shots will be shots that you have a limited focus area that is the subject of the photo, and you want the foreground to be blurred to have some color or just something to frame the shot to make the viewer look up when they look to the lower part of the picture.



This shot I use the blurring of the foreground as a frame for the subject of the picture. The tree is there to make you look to the left and down so you see the brown eyed Susan flowers as the focus of the picture.

In this photo, the focus is on the complimentary colors of the yellow and purple flowers. Having the photo blurred all around the main focus pulls your eyes right to what I want you to see. Being able to see the purple in the foreground adds to the rest of the shot with extra

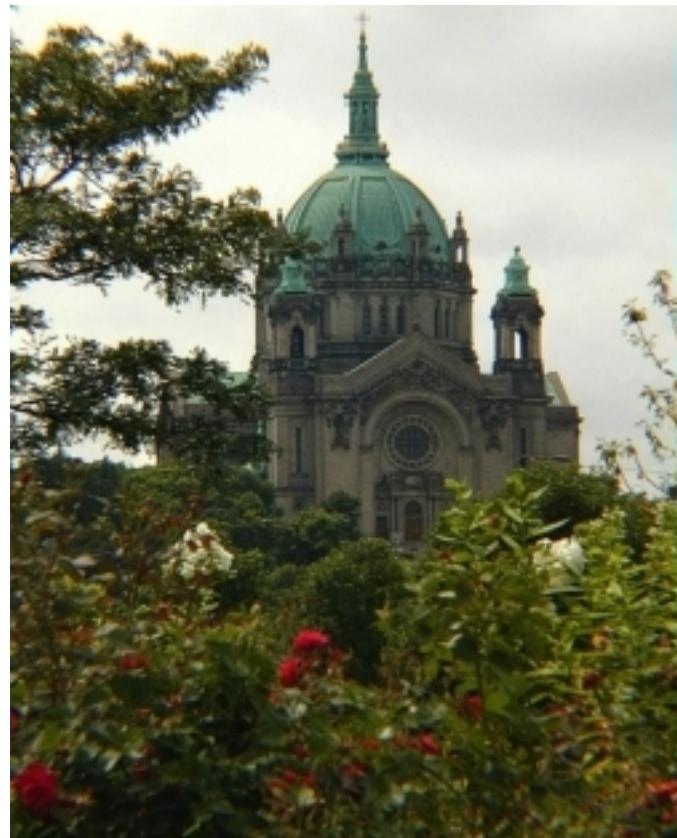
color.



This infrared picture has the foreground blurred to draw your eyes to the bridge; the bridge and the river are the focus of the shot. I love to

make infrared pictures. Infrared is so different, it makes things look unique in a way that is not natural, but you still know exactly what it is, and it looks cool.

The next shot has the foreground blurred to make you look directly to the cathedral in the background. The green and flower colors in the foreground add some interest to the shot, but do not take away from it.



Chapter Ten

Blur Background

Blurring the background is used for the same reason as blurring the foreground, to frame the shot or to direct the viewer's eyes to the subject and the point of the shot.

You can also get some cool looking distortion of the background that adds to the picture. It's called bokeh.



Bokeh is a way that you get the effect of the color for interest in the background, without taking away from the subject of the photo. Bokeh also makes the subject jump out of the photo because it makes it super sharp and gives a kind of 3D look to the shot.



This background is blurred by using a macro lens and focusing on the plant. Everything else is out of focus so the viewer knows exactly what the subject is.

A large aperture, small number, such as f2, with a longer focal length can make the area of focus in the shot be very small, it can be as shallow as less than an inch deep.

It makes focusing on the subject of your shot more difficult, but you can isolate it easily and keep everything else out of focus and not distracting.



This shot has the background blurred also so the focus is on the subject only. The background has a contrasting color so the red of the tree sprout leaves stand out from the surroundings.

The next two shots are also blurred to make the subject stand out so they are more visible and more pronounced.





Chapter Eleven

Main Street

This challenge is all about street photography. This is one of my favorite types of photography. What I like so much about this type of photography is that you have unlimited types of shots you can make.

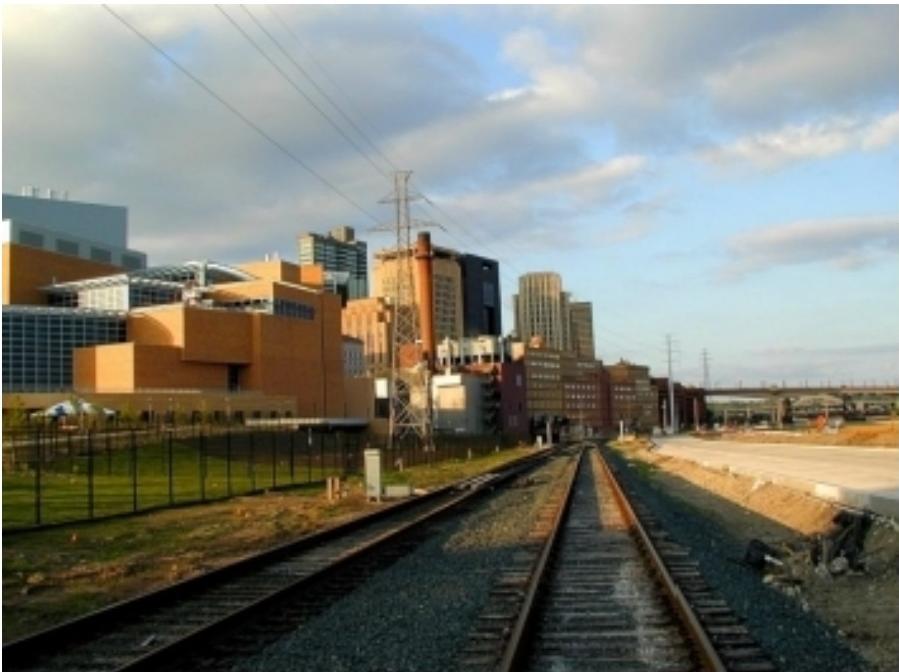
You can look for and use all of the other types of subjects, from still life's, to portraits. I recommend if you take shots of people, you ask them if it's ok, unless you are taking crowd views or shots where the person is not the subject of focus of the picture.

If you are going to take portraits for use on a website or some other public display, get a signed consent form to be allowed to use the photos.

Lots of people will think it's cool to have their face on something; it gives them a little feeling of being famous. You can offer to send them a copy of a print, if needed to convince them.

I like this shot because it is a nice view of the city of St. Paul where I use the railroad tracks as leading lines to show the view where to look.

The railroad tracks lead the viewer's eyes right to the subject, while adding some interesting objects and perspective to the shot.



The shot above is a great shot of a sculpture I took at Minnehaha Park in Minneapolis. Not really sure what it is, but it looks cool.

I made sure that the green from the tree showed through the eyes to add an extra effect to the shot.



This is a shot from Rice Park in St Paul. The building that is framed in the background is the Landmark Center. The clock tower is framed between the trees with a nice blue sky in the background.



This cool shot is of the St Paul Cathedral. I framed the Cathedral with some great flower blooms and a couple of trees.



This one is a shot of a landmark in St Paul that many people have seen in three movies and couple of music videos.

Street photography can be fun. I have walked around for hours in many places taking shots of anything that looks cool. Many of these shots will also reveal things you didn't even see when you snapped the shot.

Chapter Twelve

Parks

Parks are another one of my favorite things to shoot. One of the fun things is that you end up seeing things that most people don't see. I have spent many hours shooting photos at parks.

Obviously National parks and many state parks have great subjects to shoot, but don't overlook your local parks.

They all offer things that most people never see because they are in a hurry, and don't take time to really look.

Here is a great shot I took at the park in back of my house. It's a great park with 20 miles of trails and some great wildlife.

This is all right in the city, this particular shot was literally less than 100 yards from my house, and as you can see has some great fall colors.



This shot is one I took at Como Park in St Paul Minnesota. Como park is one of the most beautiful parks I have seen anywhere.

I have spent hundreds of hours at this park taking pictures of everything from flowers to animals at the zoo, to water features, to

boats on the lake, to golfers on the golf course.

If you are in Minnesota, you need to take a day and check this park out.



Unfortunately they redid this part several years ago; this particular garden does not exist anymore. I am so glad I got a great shot of this. I have taken hundreds of pictures of the bronze statue from different angles and distance.

I don't know where the statue went after the remodel. There are several statues that have disappeared over the years that I have not seen again, but I did get some great shots of them.

This next shot is from the Japanese garden that is directly on the other side of the building from the picture above. There are several water features in the garden that are very well done and worth seeing. These are the type of things to look for when shooting parks and the feature in the parks.



The shot above is inside the building that is on the other side of the dome in the building above at Como Park in St Paul. It's a tropical garden that creates some tough photography in the winter.

You have to keep your camera warm in the car on the way to the park, and then keep it inside your coat next to your body until you get inside the building.

If you don't, it takes 20 minutes to get the fog to dry off your lens so

your camera is usable.



This park is a nature center that is fun to walk through. I have also spent hundreds of hour taking shots at this park.

It's fun taking pictures of people, but there is a special kind of feeling you get when you're alone and it's quiet, and see something very cool and beautiful that you can capture in a picture, that you can enjoy for the rest of your life.

Sometimes you get shots that no one will ever be able to take again because some changed the area forever.

Chapter Thirteen

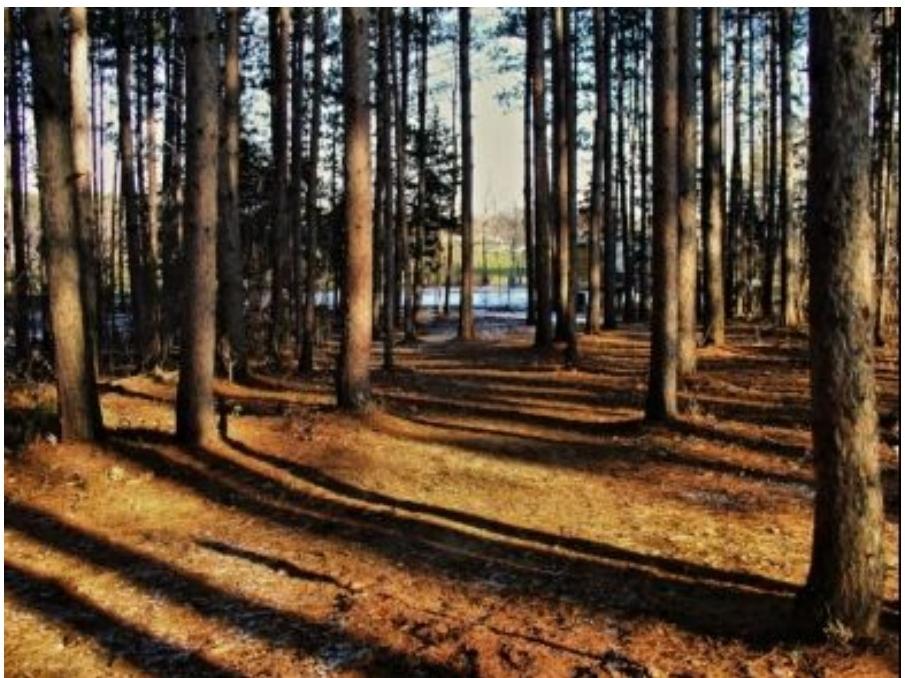
Shadows

Shadows can add much interest to photos, they can also ruin a picture, and it all depends on how you use them.

It's important to make sure they are not in shots that you don't want them to be in; they will wreck your shot.



Without the shadows, this shot is boring. With the shadows in the shots it makes the shot much more interesting and it makes the shadows the subject of the shot, not just something to accentuate the rest of the shot.



This is another shot that without the shadows it is marginal, the shadows add to the effect of the shot and makes it more interesting.

It adds contrast and tells more of a story. You can see from the shot if you analyze it that it is later in the day, the sun is fairly low in the sky because of the long shadows.

There is snow on the ground, so it's winter. The shadows help tell the story of the shot.



In this shot, I use the shadows in the background to make a darker green background so the colors in the flower really pop out. The dark green is a great contrast to the white and pinkish colors of the Lilly.

If the green background was brightly lit with sunlight, the flower would not have nearly the effect of the color.

One more shot where I used the shadows, the shadows in this shot are inside the flower to add more of a contrast and make the shot more interesting.

I took this shot in bright harsh sunlight in the middle of the day. The saving of the shot was because the shadows make it not look like harsh midday sun.



Chapter fourteen

Leading Lines

Leading lines are when you use something else in the foreground of the shot to lead the viewer's eyes to the subject of the shot, or even just through the shot to make it a more interesting and a better shot.

The bridge is the actual subject of the shot. I thought it was worth taking the shot because it's kind of broken down and falling apart.



This next shot is of the fountain statue with the sidewalk leading to the subject. It's a cool subject and worth checking out. The wall and the walkway lead you right to the fountain.

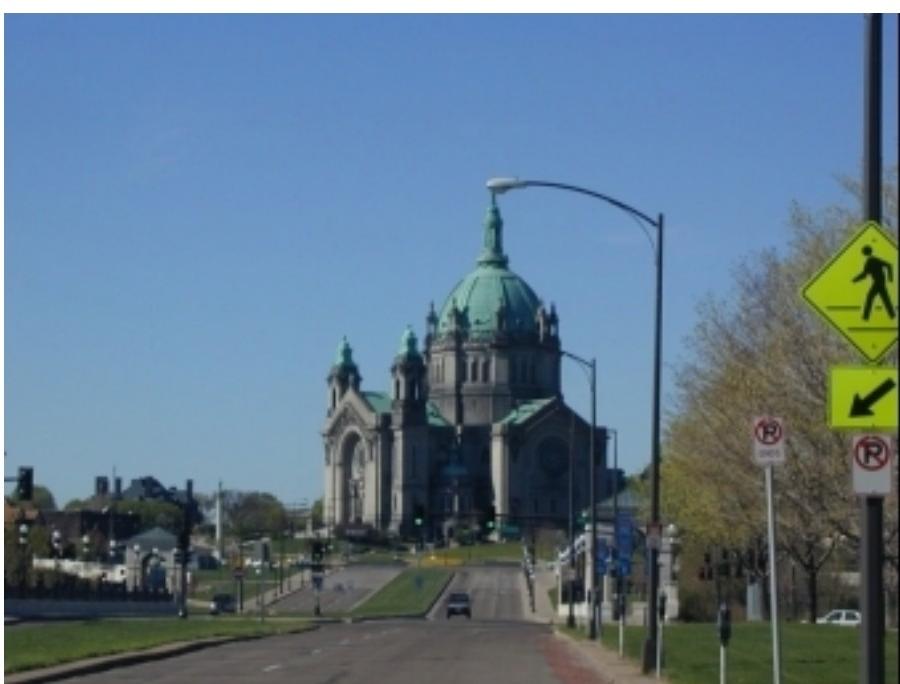


This next shot is of a hole on my favorite disc golf course. The hole is 425 feet long and about 12 feet wide all the way. It's a tough shot because it's so narrow.

The trees on both sides lead you right to the basket.

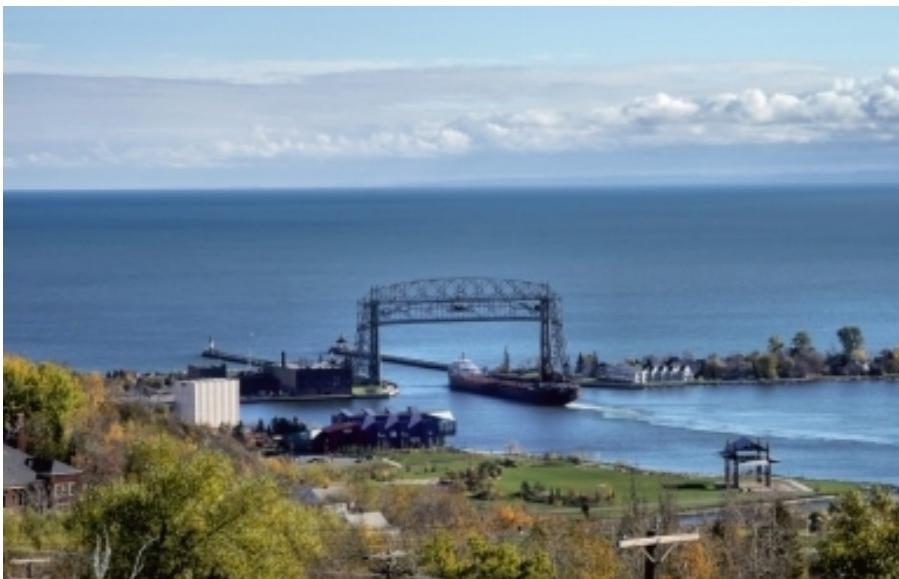


This shot is down the street in downtown St Paul Minnesota. The subject is the capital building and the street leads your eyes right to the building.



Chapter Fifteen

Water



This is a great shot I took from way up on the ridge west of Duluth Minnesota.

It was a great day for taking photos, this area has lots of fog and haze, and you don't get many chances when it's so clear and sunny.

The ore ship going under the lift bridge while I was up on the hill was a perfect accent to the shot.

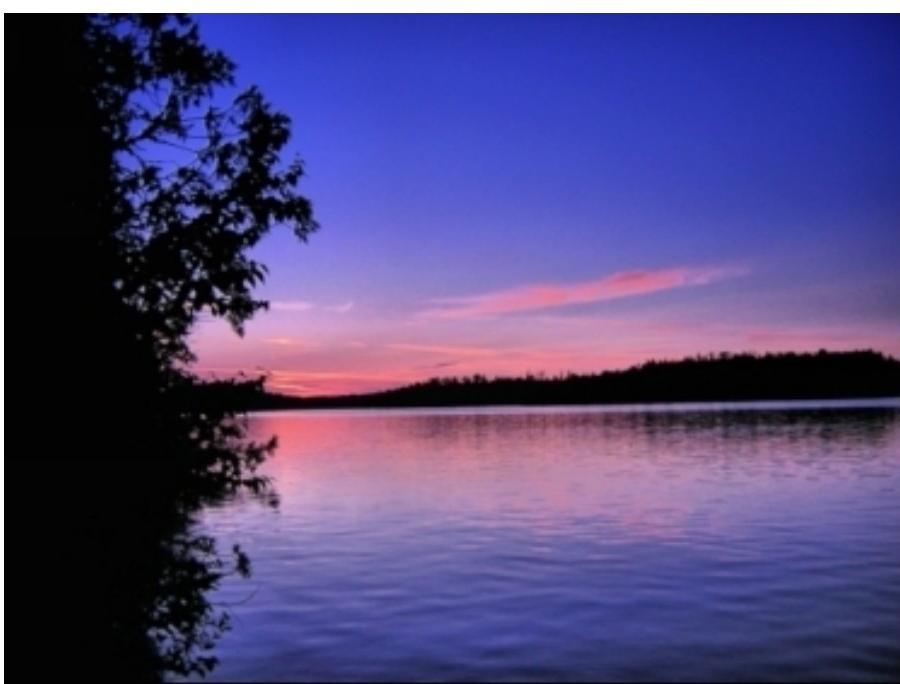
The next shot is one I took from the shore of Lake Harriet looking at the skyline of Minneapolis. It's another rare look, to get the lake so calm and get such a great reflection of the skyline on the water.



The next shot is from the Boundary waters canoe area wilderness, just after sunset on a beautiful day in late July.

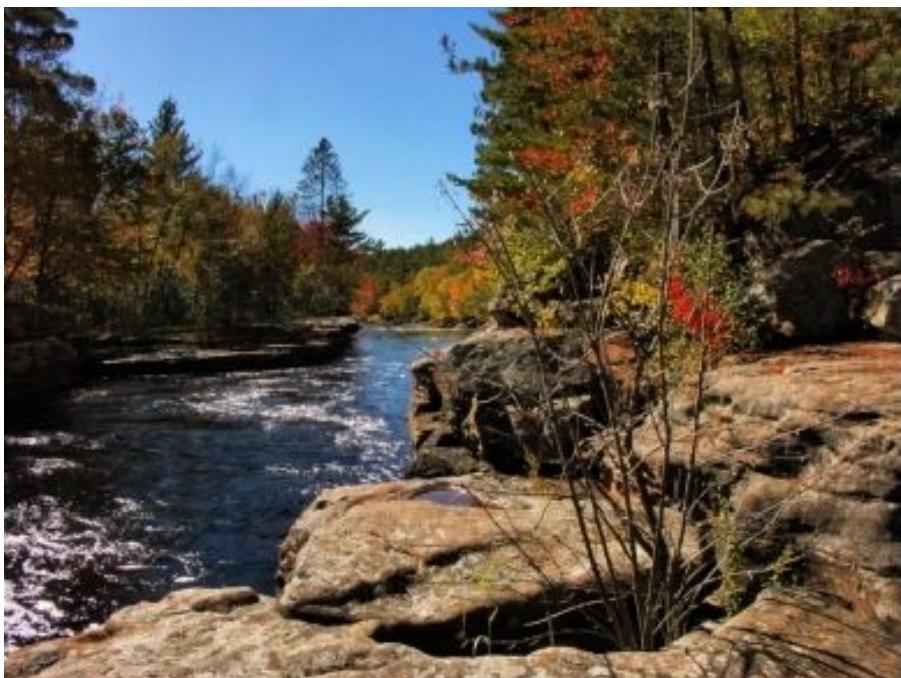
The BWCA wilderness is one of the most relaxing and most well preserved wilderness areas anywhere. Our last time there, we spent a week there and only saw two other groups of people the whole time we were there.

If you get a chance to spend some there, you should do it.



The next shot is one I took on the Kettle river in East Central Minnesota on a beautiful fall day a couple of years ago.

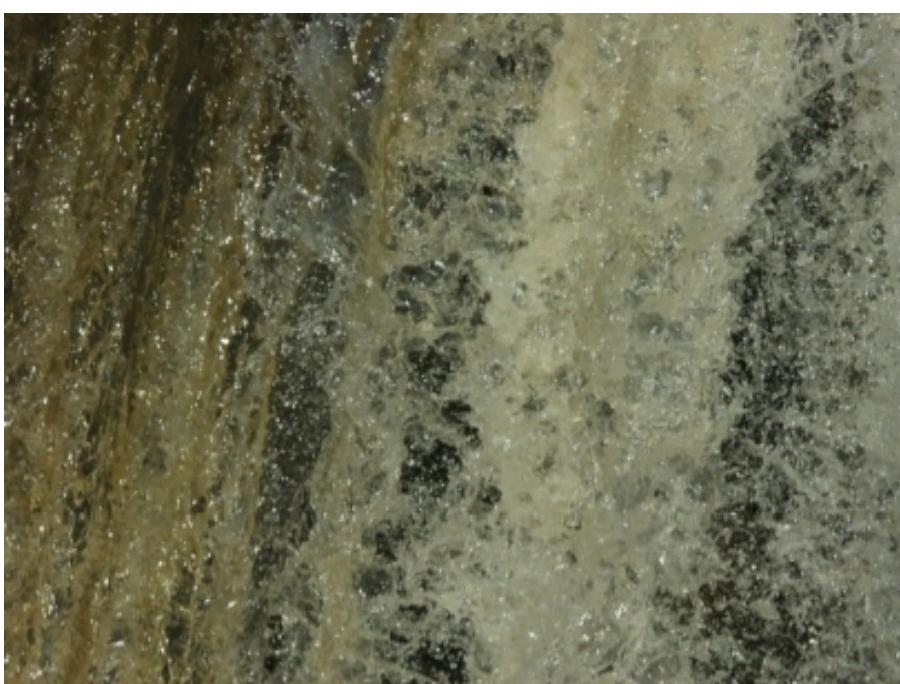
As you can see from most of these shots, the challenge of the photo is water, but the main subject is not necessarily the water. The water is a big part of making the photo better.



The next shot is another one from Duluth Minnesota. One thing about spending some time in Duluth is there are lots of great photo opportunities if you look for them and take advantage of good weather.

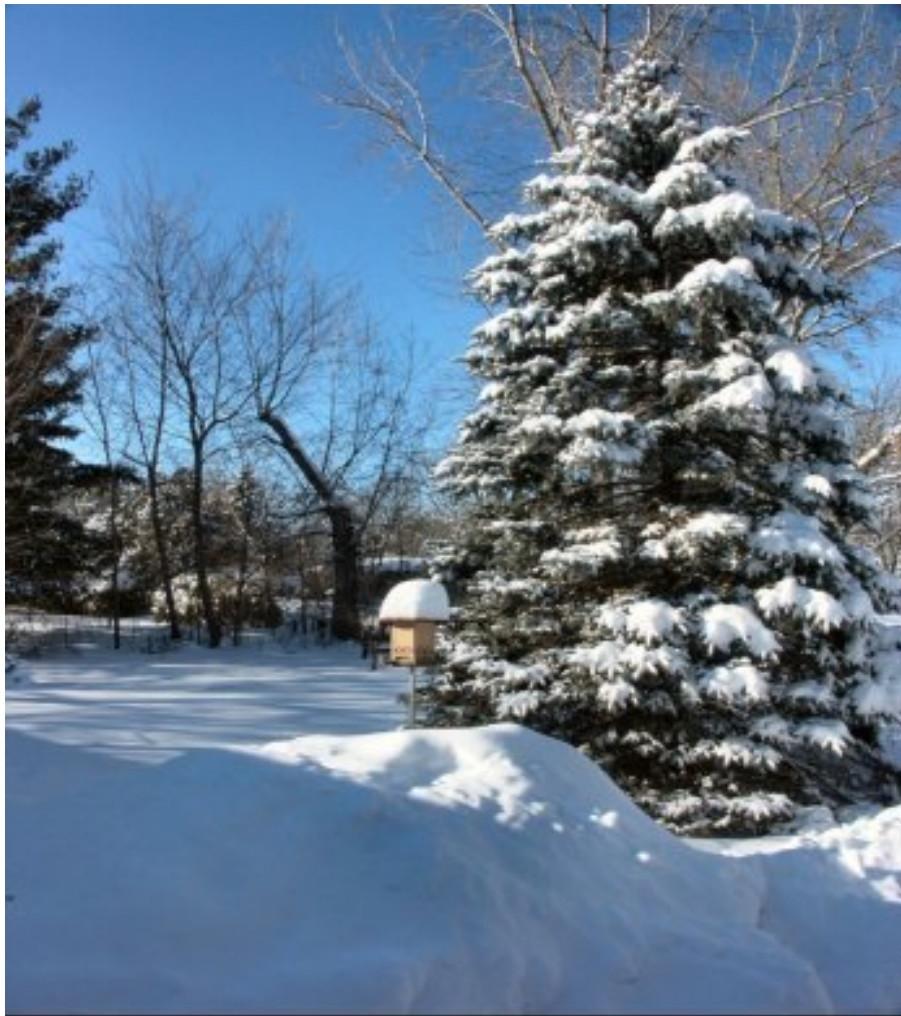


The next shot is a close up shot of the water coming over the dam in Anoka Minnesota. It was in bright sunlight with a very high shutter speed to freeze the water action.



Chapter Sixteen

Snow



The first shot in this chapter is the morning after a fresh snowfall. Taking shots of snow scenes is sometimes a challenge in itself. It's hard to get your camera meter to get the right exposure and not have the color cast of the blue sky on the snow.

You need to normally compensate 1.5 to 2 stops to get the right

exposure. A huge advantage of digital is you can see the results right away, not like film.



The next shot is off the deck after a nice snow that stuck to the trees. It always looks nice when the snow sticks to the trees, it only lasts for a couple of hours when it does happen.



This is a shot down the street from my driveway after another snow storm. Not a lot of snow but a nice look.



This shot is of the yard of the house behind ours where they raised horses. I spent a lot of time taking shots of the horses and their yard area.

They were so friendly they were sometimes hard to shoot pictures of because they would want to come right to the camera and get a pet.



One more day with the snow on the trees from the back deck after a nice snow cover from the previous night.

Chapter Seventeen

Weekly Photo walk



The shot above was such a cool shot because of the way the light is hitting the ice and it makes it look like it is pewter, or some type of metal.

Very different shot I captured just because I was out just walking around with my camera.

This next shot is one I took at the Minnesota state fair a while back. This fountain area doesn't exist anymore so it's a shot that can never be taken again.

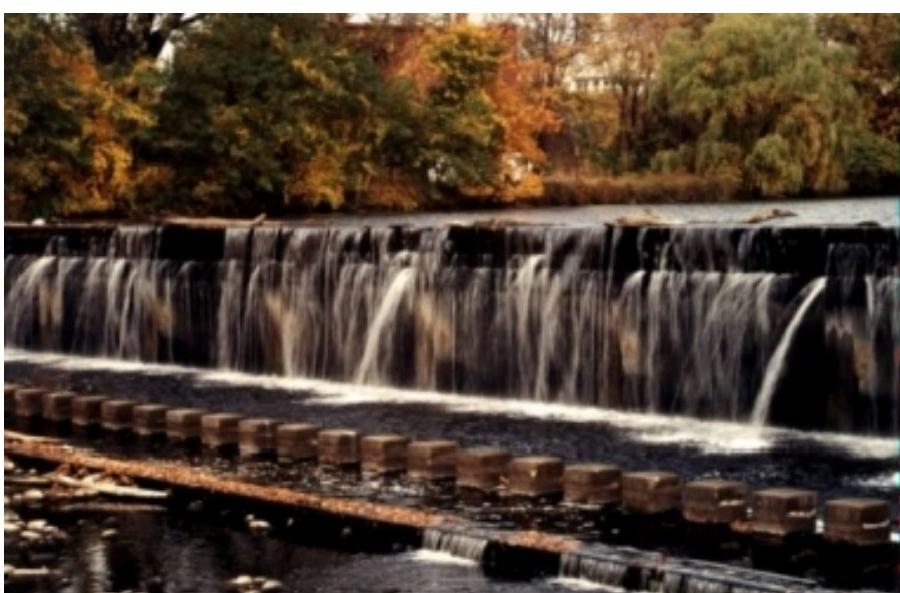


The photo below is a shot of the old Ramsey town hall building.



The shot below is one I took on a nice fall day at the dam in Anoka Minnesota. The rum river travels from central Minnesota to Anoka and into the Mississippi river just below this dam.

Every fall they slow the water flow down to just allow a trickle over the dam for the winter. Sometimes in the spring the water is so high, there is just a slight dip as the water goes over the dam



Chapter Eighteen

Night Photos



Night photos are fun, but they do require a totally different way of shooting. You can take some pretty cool shots at night without a tripod, but it is tough. The long shutter speed requires you to use a higher ISO setting to even have a chance.

This shot was taken in Duluth; I did use a tripod for this shot. One of the problems with using a much higher ISO setting is the noise level in the shot, especially in the dark areas can make the shot unusable. If you want great shots at night, use a tripod.

You have to plan ahead to get great night shots.

The shot below was hand held, no tripod. Try some shots handheld, try to lean against something and hold your breath, and gently squeeze off the shot. Use the highest ISO setting you can and still keep the noise down.





The shot above is not a great shot, I just put it in here to show you that you can take some fun shots handheld with even a point and shoot camera. You just need to be able to control the shutter speed and ISO to get the shutter to stay open long enough to get the light painting effect.



This shot was a handheld shot with my SLR camera and ISO set fairly low to keep the noise down. I think it's a nice fire shot. The key to great night shots, especially with digital cameras, is to take lots of shots. You will get many that you delete, but you can get some really great shots also.

Experiment and learn what works and what doesn't work so well.



Just a nice peaceful shot from shore, just after sunset.

Chapter Nineteen

Pick a theme



The pick a theme challenge is wide open. The shot above was a theme of Black and White. Some things look better and make a much more interesting photo in black and white than in color. This challenge forces you to look at things in black and white mode, instead of color like we normally do.



We had three pinball machines in the basement when the kids were growing up. The theme of this is the glass backgrounds of the pinball machines. Taking shots of glass can be really challenging.

You're always going to have issues with glare from light off the glass. Change your angles to shoot, side to side and up and down. Look for the best no glare spot, and then make a composition for the shot.

The shot below looks like an easy shot. It took some time to get the background set up and the flash set up so the background was more neutral, and the flash caught the crystal to look like the torch was glowing.

It's the little things that sometime people don't even realize they see. These are the things that can make the shot great.





This theme was ships. We were in Duluth. I wanted to make it look like I was out on the Lake with the ships. I took this shot from shore with a good long zoom.

I got the effect that I wanted, while getting a second ship in the shot as well. If you look just to the right of the ship in the foreground, you will see another ship in the distance as they head out to cross Lake Superior.

There are some things that I have an ongoing challenge to shoot. One of them is planes. I will always stop and take shots of cool airplanes if the opportunity arises. This is a cool looking jet parked at the Anoka Co. airport.



Chapter Twenty

Infrared





This challenge is one that will take a little more work. You will need a camera that will see infrared light, and a filter to get the great effect. This challenge is easier if you have an all in one crossover camera. One with a fixed lens, that's not a DSLR.

To check a camera, get an infrared TV or DVD remote. Look through the lens of your camera and point the remote at the camera lens. Push any buttons on the remote. If you see the light flashing when you push the remote, there is a good chance that the camera will work for infrared photography.

[Here is a good article about using Infrared filters.](#)

You need bright sunny days for the best infrared. The filters are very dark and you need a lot of light.



One of the really cool things about infrared is that it makes foliage look white, the more light on the foliage, the whiter it looks.



If you convert the shots to black and white, you can get some really cool black and white shots. Play with it and see for yourself.

These shots were almost all taken with a 2mp Olympus camera, a 2100 uz. For a fixed lens long zoom camera, I think it was one of the best ever built. Sadly it hasn't worked for a while.

If I could get a new one now, I would. I took over 30,000 pictures with that camera, and it was perfect for infrared, and all I had to do was screw a filter on the lens it was ready to go.



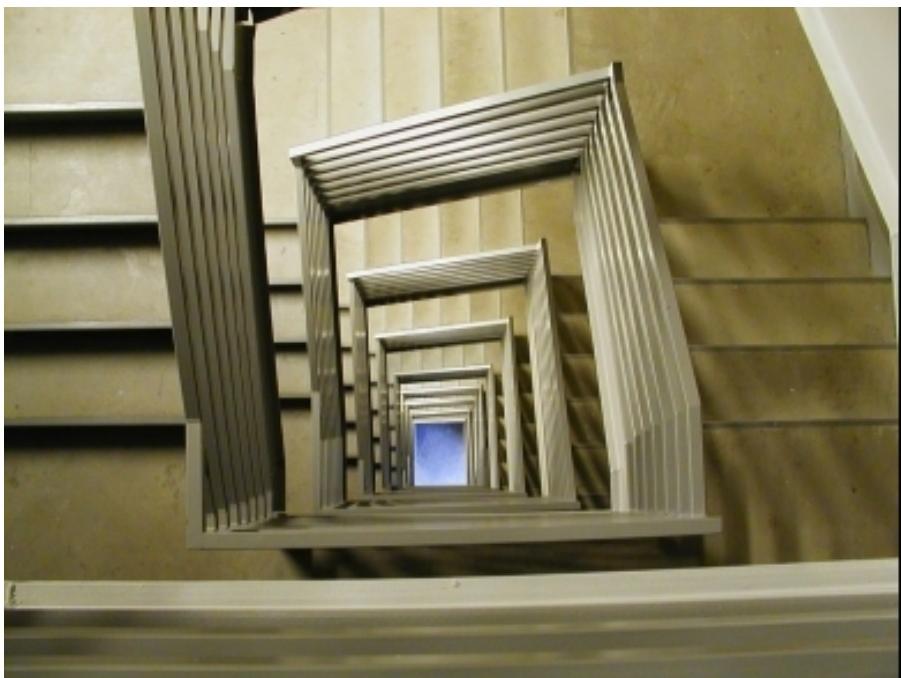
Infrared is such an interesting look, and a lot of fun to play around with. If you have a camera that will do it, check it out, you will be pleasantly surprised with what you can do.

Chapter Twenty one

Repeating Patterns



As with most of the challenges, the point is to get you to look at things you would not normally pay attention too. This shot is a shot of carpet at a doctor's office. I just took it with my phone but I think it's an interesting shot. Can you remember what the carpet at your doctor's office looks like, probable not.



This is a shot down a cool stairwell at my brother in laws business. Something that you may look at and say that's cool, but taking a shot and keeping it for future use is even cooler.



This shot is of a fancy lamp that had golf ball size crystal hanging from the bottom of it.

My wife loved it because when the sun came through the window, there were thousands of little rainbows all over the house walls.



This shot I think is cool because of the pattern of the outside of the light, but the glass bulb in the center pulls it all together as a cool shot.

This is actually a solar garden light that stopped working; we kept it for a while even after, just because it was cool to look at.



The pattern here was the geese. The picture above of the pond that I shot in infrared, the one with the trees sticking out of it. The city was trying to kill off the invasive weeds in the pond so they drained all the water out of it. I was standing about 100 yard out in the pond that was dried up at the time, and the geese were coming in to land, they landed about 30 feet in front of me.

Chapter Twenty Two

Colors



Colors are a fun challenge, pick a color and go out shooting. Look for the color you selected, and try to find that color wherever you are, and make a great picture out of it.

You'll be surprised how many places you will see a particular color, where you never even noticed it before.



The more vibrant the color you chose, and the more contrasting you can make it in the shot, the more it will stand out and make it look better.



For this shot, my color was yellow. Even though the yellow is not the main color in the shot, it makes the photo pop because of it.

Yellow and purple are good contrasting colors that make both colors look better.



Flowers are one of the best things to look for when you're doing a color challenge.

They don't have to be the main focus of the shot; the colors can be used to add to the shot to make it better.



Another yellow color pick. The green of the leaves and the various grey shades of the tree truck, all add the yellow by making it stand out more.

Chapter Twenty Three

Framing



Framing is something I try to do on a large percentage of the landscape shots I take. You can frame it on top and bottom, or on the sides, or both. This shot I used the pine trees to frame the top of the barn.

You can also use the side of the picture as a framing element combines with a natural frame.



This is a fun shot I took at Split rock lighthouse on the North shore of Lake Superior. I saw the spot to frame the shot between the birch trees and it felt like it was meant to be.



Sometimes you can make great landscape shots with a long zoom. The ability to compress the distance adds a lot to this shot. The trees in

the foreground are a descent way in front of where I was standing.

To get the full effect of the color in the mid part of the shot, as well as the snow covered peak across the valley, it worked well doing this.

The peaks on the far side of the valley are over 80 miles away from where I am standing. It's one of my favorite places. Just north of Bryce Canyon National Park in central Utah.

The shot below is a statue in Como Park in St Paul Minnesota, framed between two trees.

The key to most framing is the get the subject and the frame in focus, although sometimes it works really well to have the frame blurred so it's not in focus.







The two shots above are nice framed shots of buildings that I used tree branches as the frame to draw attention to the buildings as the main subject.

Conclusion

The whole reason to do projects is to get yourself to see things you would not normally see, by forcing you to look at things more closely. Our lives are so busy now days that we miss a lot of what is around us, even if we see it every day.

Making yourself slow down and really look at things, and seeing every part of the things we look at, will make you advance ahead in your photography by huge strides.

Being able to see things, and being able to make the photo composition interesting and cool, will make you a much better photographer.

Going from someone who takes snapshots, to becoming someone who makes pictures is something that, like anything else takes practice. Just taking lots of picture will not make you a better photographer if you aren't learning as you go.

There are more people taking pictures than ever before. The advent of the cell phone with a real camera has made everyone a potential photographer, but most people just take snapshots of things, and never think about what they are looking at, or composing the shot to make it better.

Learn to look and learn to see these things, and you will become a good or great photographer, even if you don't have the top of the line equipment, you can still make great photos.

Thank you for reading my book. If you have a minute, I would appreciate if you would go to the [Amazon web site](#) and write a short review of the book so other people will see your review and want to read the book so they can also become a better photographer.

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